

Greenbelt Arts Advisory Board Report 20-1
To the City Council of the City of Greenbelt
July 1, 2019

Subject: Councilman Colin Byrd's request that the Arts Advisory Board provide recommendations to the Greenbelt City Council on whether to partner with local artists to design and add placemaking banners to lamp posts and if so, ways to do so.

The Arts Advisory Board discussion of Mr. Byrd's request took place at its meetings held October 2nd, informally on November 13th and then again on December 4th, 2018. AAB discussed a variety of approaches to the possible selection of artwork, including commissions from individual artists and/or the commissioning of a graphic designer to work with neighborhood residents who may or may not be artists themselves. The difficulty the AAB has encountered in responding to this request comes from answering the "why" question regarding the creation of banners. Absent clear direction and purpose for the banners, we feel at a loss as to what exactly we would be asking local artists or a graphic designer to create. Not only is the AAB being requested to give artistic input in the creation of the proposed banners, we feel we are also being implicitly requested to justify the potential project, which is something we do not feel qualified to do.

However, the AAB is making the following recommendation regarding the council referral. In theory, we feel that the best use of banners would be to visually unify three areas of Greenbelt to make them identifiable as part of the city of Greenbelt while at the same time celebrating the diversity each neighborhood represents. The number of metal light poles available for the installation of banners varies significantly from one area to the next, though, which causes AAB to question whether banners are actually the most equitable strategy for recognizing and unifying Greenbelt neighborhoods. An alternative suggestion would be the creation of painted intersections.

Should banners be created, they should be uniform in font, wording and style with the variations coming from the image content provided by local artists and/or a graphic designer. AAB would recommend that each banner be unique, so as not to expect any one image to adequately represent the identity of a neighborhood.

One of our considerations is the cost of the design, creation and installation of banners. Where will the funding for the project come from? AAB recommends that participating artists and designers should be compensated for the use of their artwork. With respect to production, a preliminary cost estimate of \$129 per banner was obtained from signs.com for unique, 18" X 42" color banners with installation hardware. It is of concern to the AAB that money would be diverted from other arts funding and if that would be the case, we don't feel that defunding current projects or organizations in order to create banners would be appropriate.

The artwork represented on the banners may be multimedia in nature since each piece will need to be photographed and it is the photographic image of the artwork that will be used for the banner and not the art itself. There could be an art showing of the original pieces in the Greenbelt Municipal Building in conjunction with the installation of the banners. The art show could help

to highlight the artists whose work was used as well as how they visually celebrate the diversity of the neighborhoods in Greenbelt.

Thank you for this referral to the Arts Advisory Board. I hope that our input on the idea of banner creation in the city of Greenbelt is useful.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mark Granfors-Hunt, Chair
Arts Advisory Board